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THE GIFT

MARGARET DOUGLAS ROGERS





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THE GIFT

A POETIC DRAMA

BY

MARGARET DOUGLAS ROGERS

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My Gifts

OF MIND AND HEART I DEDICATE
ALIKE TO

My Husband

ACT I.

THE GIFT

ACT I

SCENE: *A charming woodland. In an open space are discovered the nine Muses dancing in a circle to the harp-strains of Apollo, who sits in the center. The circle separates, dividing right and left, and Apollo, after a few absent-minded thrums on his harp, speaks.*

APOLLO.

And is the task completed? Hast thou each
Bestowed a gift upon this radiant sprite
Moulded of clay from off the earthly sphere
By gods upon the high Olympian mount?

THE MUSES.

Yea, all 's completed.

CALLIOPE.

Every gift 's bestowed,
And Woman soon shall bless or curse the earth.
I gave her of my voice—

THE GIFT

EUTERPE.

And I my song.

ERATO.

I gave her love of love.

THALIA.

I gave her joy
And wit and gayety;—I 'll make her laugh!

TERPSICHORE.

And she shall dance, for I her dainty feet
To love of rhythm set.

URANIA.

And I the stars
Have made her know, and all things else
Pertaining to the heavens.

CLIO.

I the love
Of glory planted in her—that the deeds
Of might performed by gods and men might
meet
Her approbation.

THE GIFT

POLYHYMNIA.

I the sacred things
Made her to wish for; to adore the gods
And sing their praises in befitting hymns.

MELPOMENE.

The goddess I of Tragedy: I fear
That without me her life is incomplete.
For when the gods this human creature made
They mixed, with all the virtues they endowed,
Some human weakness.

APOLLO.

And yet haply, she
May find such joy in all these other gifts
As not to know thee. I have giv'n
Such skill in sounds as doth delight the ear,
And Venus gave her beauty, and the art
Of gracious manner; while Minerva then
With housewifery endowed her. Thus, all robed
In lovely garments by the Graces made,
Embellished by the Horae, she will soon
Be sent to Epimetheus, the one
For whom the gods hath made her. Who shall
say

THE GIFT

That aught but joy and happiness awaits
Pandora, the all-gifted?

[*Enter Epimetheus.*]

EPIMETHEUS.

Hail to thee,
Thrice great Apollo and the Muses nine,
What chance hath brought thee earthward, and
what meed
Of service can I render, with such skill
As doth possess me?

APOLLO.

Epimetheus,
Thou art the reason for this gathering.
Thou with thy wisdom hast endowed the beasts
With all their various knowledge, and for man
Did'st borrow fire from heaven. But one thing
Thou lackest still, with all thy attributes—
It is a help-mate for thy lone estate.
And to assist thee, all the deities
Assembled on Olympus, have combined
T'enrich with pleasing virtues, a most rare
And wondrous mortal creature, made of clay.
Her kind shall be called Woman, and the name

THE GIFT

The gods hath given her, Pandora;—thus—
Pandora, the All-Gifted.

[Epimetheus is almost overcome.]

EPIMETHEUS.

This to me?

O all ye Olympian gods and goddesses,
Bear witness to my gratitude and joy!

[To Apollo.]

Yet tell me of this creature. Doth she walk
As I do, on two feet, or doth she fly?
Doth she wear feathers, fur, or is she clothed
As I?

APOLLO.

Like an Olympian goddess she,
Yet made of mortal clay, and so of earth;
Timid, yet bold, and passionate, yet shy,
And to be won, must eagerly be sought.

EPIMETHEUS.

Pray, bring this creature to me, that mine eyes
Behold, and know thou speakest what is true.

APOLLO.

Thy wish is granted. Muses tune thy lyres,
Invoke the deities, and bid her come!

THE GIFT

[The Muses bring forth their lyres and other instruments, which have been resting near. Apollo adds his skill, and they sing the invocation.]

THE MUSES.

O fair one, come—'t is wooing-time,
For Spring is on the lea—
The sunshine kisses hill and dale,
The moonbeams kiss the sea.

The doves coo love-songs to their mates
The flow'rs list to the bees,
The breezes touch with loving breath
The gently quivering trees.

The air is rife with melody,
No loving heart is dumb—
O touch her heartstrings lightly, Love,
And bid Pandora come!

[In a shaft of light Pandora appears, escorted by Mercury. Not far from her, and all unnoticed, follows little Cupid, armed with his bows and arrows. He watches Epimetheus mischievously, and draws an arrow from his quiver. During the conver-

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sation and events following, he tries his bow deliberately, feels his arrow carefully, chooses another, fits it to his bow, and finally draws his bow and aims an arrow straight at the heart of Epimetheus. Epimetheus, at sight of Pandora, stands rooted, spell-bound. Pandora advances half way, smiling, then stands, timid and overcome. Soft-stringed music has accompanied their entrance.]

MERCURY.

Great Epimetheus, hail! A messenger,
Charged by the deities am I, to bring
To thee a gift of priceless worth;—a wife—
Who brings to thee a dower of many charms.
Love and defend her; give her of thy store,
For ne'er hath man or Titan been so blest.
Her kind shall be called Woman, and her name,
Pandora—Gifted One.

EPIMETHEUS.

Ah, Mercury,
Convey for me my very grateful thanks,
And tell the gods their gift is well bestowed.

THE GIFT

MERCURY.

Thou sayest well, and so I bid Adieu.
May gods and goddesses befriend thy home.
[*Exits.*]

EPIMETHEUS.

[*To Pandora.*]

Ah—art thou she?—Pandora—Gifted One?
The creature made of clay? [*Confused.*] Thou
art most fair!

[*Holds forth his arms patronizingly.*]
I pray thee, come to me; let me behold
At closer range thy loveliness!

PANDORA.

[*Timid and frightened.*]

Ah—no!

I dare not! Thou art such a monster!—No!

EPIMETHEUS.

What, I a monster? I, thou timid one?
I am the Titan Epimetheus,
Who with Prometheus, my brother, hath
Appointment by the deities to give
The animals their various attributes,

THE GIFT

And who for man the heav'nly fire didst steal.
Dost know me not? Come to me—thou art
mine!

PANDORA.

I know thee not, and I am sore afraid!

ERATO.

He will not hurt thee, foolish one; go forth
And greet thy lord and master, whom the gods
Would have thee honor and obey.

PANDORA.

No, no!

EPIMETHEUS.

Ah ha, then, I will take thee; thou *shalt* come!

[He advances towards Pandora, but at this juncture Cupid directs the arrow he has been preparing, straight at his heart. He stops, claps his hand upon his heart, and expresses great pain. Pandora turns away, and, beholding the Muses, seeks their company and examines their harps with interest.]

THE GIFT

PANDORA.

[*To the Muses.*]

What pretty toys! Acquaint me with their use!

[*Calliope, Euterpe, and Erato proceed to give her a lesson on the harp, the others looking on with interest, Apollo abstractedly thrumming on his harp, and dividing his attention between them and Epimetheus. Epimetheus staggers slightly, yet gazes in pained rapture at the unconcerned Pandora. Cupid smiles mischievously and departs.*]

EPIMETHEUS.

O—I am wounded sore! What means this pain!
I die! Mine eyes are blinded with the light
She radiates. O come, Pandora, come—
I die!

[*He falls back against a tree, reaching his arms to her and gazing amorously. She does not hear nor notice him. Enter Prometheus. He does not see Epimetheus.*]

PROMETHEUS.

Apollo, hail! Thy melodies
Hath brought my wandering footsteps at thy
call.

THE GIFT

Pray, what hath brought thee and the Muses
hence

So near the portal of my poor abode?

*[Apollo looks at him absently and nods
toward the suffering Epimetheus.]*

PROMETHEUS.

[Advancing toward Epimetheus.]

Ho, brother, what dost ail thee? Art thou hurt?

EPIMETHEUS.

*[Still gazing rapturously at Pandora, his
hand upon his wounded heart.]*

Dost see her there, the fair one? O, my heart!
How fair she is and lovely—past compare!

PROMETHEUS.

[Indifferently.]

Aye, she 's a comely maid, yet thou hast seen
Full many goddesses more fair than she!

EPIMETHEUS.

No—none were ever fashioned half so fair!
She is a gift sent to me by the gods.
Pray go to her and bid her speak to me
And smile upon me, or I die!

THE GIFT

PROMETHEUS.

So, ho!

Thy wound is feverish, I see, and thou
Hast a delirium. Methinks the hurt
Was caused by one of Cupid's naughty pranks.

EPIMETHEUS.

Brother, the gods hath sent her. She is mine,
And yet she turns away.

[Pleadingly to Pandora.]

Pandora, come!

I will not hurt thee, gentle creature;—come
And ease these pains that do so rack my heart!

*[Pandora glances back at him, then in
timid fear retreats further away.]*

PROMETHEUS.

Take my advice and counsel, brother mine,
Beware of gifts by deities bestowed.
They do but augur ill, for deities
Are most exacting. Take her not, I say.

EPIMETHEUS.

[Angrily.]

Go from me, brother; thou art like an ass
For foolishness!

THE GIFT

PROMETHEUS.

[*Unmoved.*]

Consider yet again.

Dost think the gods would send a gift all good
To thee or me, who stole their heav'nly fire?
Beware, I tell thee, brother;—this fair face
Hath stol'n thy wits away, else wert thou wise.

EPIMETHEUS.

Begone with thy unwelcome counsel! Go
And tell it to the sylvan Echo nymph,
And she will speak it o'er and o'er for thee,
So thou may'st hear and gloat upon thy words.
Repeat them not to me—I will not hear!

PROMETHEUS.

What foolish speech—

APOLLO.

[*Laughs low and musically.*]

Prometheus, thou 'rt undone.
Scant gratitude thy counsel doth invite.
Come, go with me;—and, Muses, bring your
lyres
And leave these foolish mortals here alone.

[*The Muses prepare to leave.*]

THE GIFT

PANDORA.

O take me with thee—leave me not alone.
I am afraid—afraid to be alone!

ERATO.

No, child, thou canst not come—this is thy
home;
Stay with this sad, brave heart which longs for
thee!

[The Muses follow Apollo and Prometheus, gracefully twanging their harps and pausing to speak to her as they pass.]

CLIO.

Fear not, Pandora, for thy fame will go
Adown the ages. Thou art blest indeed.

POLYHYMNIA.

Thou hast a sacred duty to perform.

THALIA.

[Mischievously.]

Tease him, Pandora—laugh at him, and make
Him laugh with thee. No god was ever won
By solemn visage, and a Titan less.
So tease him, coax him, wheedle him—but
smile!

THE GIFT

TERPSICHOE.

And make him dance while thou dost gaily pipe!

[They trip off, laughing, except Melpomene, who is last of all, and who pauses and looks sorrowfully at her as if about to speak, then follows the others silently. Pandora glances timidly at Epimetheus.]

EPIMETHEUS.

[Advancing toward her.]

Pandora, little one, behold thy mate!
See, I would kneel and kiss thy little hand.
Look on me, dear. Hast thou no fav'ring mark,
No look of approbation to bestow?

[She does not resist him, but looks at him long and earnestly, while Cupid enters and, with roguish look, aims an arrow at her heart, then exits.]

PANDORA.

[Bewildered.]

Why, thou art not a monster! And thou hast
A goodly countenance. O—what a pain!
It struck me here!

[Presses her hand to her heart, then notices his wound.]

THE GIFT

And thou—hast thou a wound?
Arise. Draw near, that I may know thy hurt
And tend its healing. Art thou in much pain?

EPIMETHEUS.

[Rising joyfully.]

In pain no more, my own, my priceless gift,
Since thou dost look on me with fav'ring eyes.
Come to my wounded heart and nestle there,
And still its wild pulsations.

[Places her hand on his heart.]

Canst thou feel
How yearningly it beats for thee, my love?

[He takes her, yielding, in his arms.]

O this is bliss! Kiss me, dear heart, and say
If thus thy pain is stilled, as is mine own?

PANDORA.

. . . Yes—ah, yes, my foolish, timid heart
Doth lose its ache while in thine arms I rest.
Ah, stay with me, my love, for I am thine,
And thou art mine. And I will be thy wife
As thou dost wish me.

EPIMETHEUS.

Yea, my wedded wife!

[He kisses her. Tableau.]

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

ACT II

SCENE *out of doors, the home of Epimetheus in the background. Epimetheus is discovered alone, seated upon a stone bench in foreground. Enter Mercury, carrying a large wooden box upon his back.*

EPIMETHEUS.

[*Rising.*]

Why, Mercury, a heavy load thou hast.
Pray set it down and rest a moment here!

MERCURY.

[*Putting down the box.*]

My journey's ended, Epimetheus,
For 'tis to thee the gods have sent this box.
They bid thee keep it in thy sacred charge,
Nor ask its contents, nor investigate.

EPIMETHEUS.

The gods hath honored me to thus entrust
Their secret to my keeping. Tell them I
Will guard it with mine honor's sacred pledge.
The box shall not be opened.

THE GIFT

MERCURY.

Then farewell,
My duty is accomplished, and I bear
Aloft thy promise,—so again, farewell!
[*Exit.*]

[*Epimetheus resumes his seat and looks
long and earnestly at the box.*]

EPIMETHEUS.

Another mystery! I am indeed
Both blest and curst; and which is uppermost—
The blessing or the curse, I cannot tell,—
Time shall alone discover. Well I know
The sweet mysterious spell of love, and yet
The mystery of Woman and her moods
I can but guess at vaguely, knowing less
Yet puzzling more, as Time doth bear us on.
The secrets which lie hid within this box
I may not know nor guess at, yet I know
It holds no mystery to tease my soul
As doth the witching ways of womankind.

[*Pandora comes out of the house and
pauses at top of the wide steps.*]

PANDORA.

Art lonely, love? Dost wish for company?

THE GIFT

EPIMETHEUS.

[*Rising joyfully.*]

Aye, truly, dear, such company as thou!

[*He advances toward her, and she descends the steps, smiling and very lovely, and approaches Epimetheus with half timid, half eager grace. He enfolds her in his arms, middle stage. Cupid enters and hovers about unnoticed.*]

PANDORA.

Tell me thy thoughts, love, when thou art alone.
What brings that puzzled wrinkle to thy brow?

EPIMETHEUS.

My thoughts are all of thee, dear, thee alone;
Awake or dreaming, thou art imaged here
Upon my heart; and if I, puzzled, frown,
It is in wonder at thy loveliness.

PANDORA.

Ah, thou art but a flatterer, forsooth,
And yet like music to my willing ears
Thy fair words ring. What happiness is mine!
How lovely is the world!

[*She notices the box.*]

THE GIFT

Why, what is this?
Oh, what a pretty box! How came it here?

[She runs toward it and begins to examine it.]

EPIMETHEUS.

'T was brought by Mercury a while ago—
The gods have bade me keep it in my care.

PANDORA.

A gift! And from the gods! What luck is this!
Pray open it and see what is within!

EPIMETHEUS.

Nay, I am charged to keep it as it is,
Nor ask its contents, nor investigate.

PANDORA.

O foolish one! What dost thou say, indeed!
It cannot matter if we take a peep!
The gods do merely tease thee; they enjoy
Their little jokes.—Do come and peep with me!

*[She fumbles at the knotted golden cord
which binds the box.]*

THE GIFT

EPIMETHEUS.

[Staying her hand.]

Nay, stop, Pandora, I have made a vow
That I will leave the box unopened here,
Nor meddle with it.

PANDORA.

Keep thy foolish vow!
Thou 'rt mad to make it! I have made no vow!

[She endeavors to untie the knot.]

EPIMETHEUS.

Pandora, thou art mine and I am thine—
We twain are one. My promises involve
Us both. Thou must not—dar'st not look
within!

[He restrains her, and they stand looking at each other steadily, while Melpomene, unseen of them, slowly crosses the stage in background, gazing at them sadly as she passes.]

PANDORA.

[Preparing to weep.]

Thou dost not love me, Epimetheus;
Thou carest more for foolish vows than me!

THE GIFT

EPIMETHEUS.

[*Taking her in his arms.*]

Not love thee, little wife? I do indeed;
Thou art the very heart and life of me.

PANDORA.

Yet thou dost hesitate to grant to me
So trivial a wish. My happiness
Is not thy first endeavor.

EPIMETHEUS.

Why, my dear,
Thou hast but just remarked thy happiness
A moment since.

PANDORA.

That was before mine eyes
Had seen the curious box, and my heart knew
Thou carest less for me than for thy vow.

EPIMETHEUS.

[*Tried to the utmost.*]

O Woman, Woman, canst not understand
Mine honor must come first before my love?

THE GIFT

PANDORA.

[*Angrily.*]

I understand but one thing well, my lord,
Thou lovest not, and hast a stubborn will.
I leave thee with thine honor. Think on it
And glory in it, and thy stubbornness!

[*She hurriedly enters the house. Cupid runs off in dismay.*]

EPIMETHEUS.

[*To the box.*]

A curse be on thee, thou unholy thing!
Thy look is sinister, and makes me feel
A dread of lurking mystery and ill.
Would I had not received thee, for methinks
Th' Olympian gods but make of me a jest.

[*He disappears, left.*]

[*Enter, right, the Muses, laughing, dancing, and singing, except Melpomene, who, unsmiling, immediately advances toward the box, and silently hovers over it. Thalia, laughing, runs toward her.*]

THALIA.

Pray, solemn sister, and what hast thou here?

[*Others gather about.*]

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ERATO.

A box—and what a pretty cord!

EUTERPE.

[Trying to push through and see.]

Give way!

Let me behold it, too!

CLIO.

How strange it looks!

URANIA.

Nay, touch it not, I say; the stars are not
Propitious.

CLIO.

Lo, it shall be known
Adown the distant ages, with Pandora.

CALLIOPE.

Pandora? Is it then Pandora's box?

CLIO.

Not hers, but woven with her fate.

MELPOMENE.

[Arousing herself with tragic gesture.]

Alas!

THE GIFT

URANIA.

The stars are not propitious.

THALIA.

Well a-day!

Away with dark forebodings! Never yet

Was life made easier with dread of ill.

TERPSICHORE.

*[Runs out and takes a dancing-step.
Euterpe joins her, and the others follow, all
circling in the dance as they sing, except
Melpomene, who still hovers over the box.]*

Let 's dance,

EUTERPE.

And sing,

THALIA.

And charm the hours away,

ALL.

For now is the springtime of the world,

And all the earth is gay!

THALIA.

Then laugh—

THE GIFT

ERATO.

And love,

ALL.

Let joy and mirth hold sway,
For earth 's in its blossoming, love 's in its
bud,
And love shall reign for aye!

*[Enter Pandora. She is pulling a daisy
to pieces, reciting to the petals. She does
not notice the others.]*

PANDORA.

He loves me,
He loves me not,
He loves me,
He loves me not!

*[Throws down the flower impatiently
and sighs. The Muses gather about her.]*

ERATO.

What strange, mysterious spell is this, Pandora,
That tells thee that thy lover loves thee not?

PANDORA.

He loves me not, but prates to me of vows.
He hath a mystic box—see, there it is—

THE GIFT

And when I would but lift the lid to peep
At what 's within, he stays my hand and prates
Of foolish vows to Mercury.

MELPOMENE.

Beware!

URANIA.

The stars are not propitious.

CLIO.

It is fate!

ERATO.

Ah, treat a good man's love not lightly, child,
He is thy husband, and to be obeyed.

POLYHYMNIA.

Thou must revere the deities, and vows
Must not be broken, Pandora, beware!

*[The Muses join hands, circle and dance
and sing as before.]*

EUTERPE.

Come sing,

TERPSICHORE.

And dance,

THE GIFT

THALIA.

And charm the hours away!

ALL.

For now is the springtime of the world,
And all the earth is gay!

THALIA.

Then laugh,—

ERATO.

And love,

ALL.

Let joy and mirth hold sway.
For earth 's in its blossoming, love 's in its bud,
And love shall reign for aye.

[The Muses, except Melpomene, dance off, trying to persuade Pandora to follow, but she will not, casting longing glances at the box. When the others have gone, she and Melpomene stand silently facing each other for a moment, then Melpomene sadly and silently leaves.]

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PANDORA.

[When all have departed.]

At last! I am alone—with mystery.
I am almost affrighted—my heart beats
In wild, unruly measure. What is this
Strange power that lures me—draws me, at its
will?

[She draws a step nearer with each word, as though half reluctantly and under a spell, then suddenly pulls herself together.]

I have a will—I will not be so drawn!
The vow!

[She starts suddenly. Mysterious voices in the air repeat.]

The Vow! The Vow!

[Pandora hears them only in her conscience.]

PANDORA.

[Weakly.]

I made no vow. A foolish vow
Were better broken.

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VOICES OF THE AIR.

[*Wailing.*]

Broken—broken!

PANDORA.

Oh—

These treacherous doubts! Why dally with
them more?

I wonder—

[*Fumbles with the cord.*]

if I could unloose the knot!

VOICES OF THE AIR.

[*Very faint.*]

Broken—Broken!

[*A distant rumble of thunder is heard.
Pandora is too absorbed to heed. It grows
almost imperceptibly darker. Enter Epime-
theus.*]

EPIMETHEUS.

Pandora!

PANDORA.

[*Startled.*]

O—how thou didst startle me!

THE GIFT

[*Guiltily.*]

I was but toying with the knot—'t is quaint
And doth amuse me.

[*Pause. Epimetheus looks at her steadily
without speaking.*]

Come and try thy skill!
It cannot harm thee just to match thy wit
Against the skill that tied this knot so fast.

[*She continues to fumble at it. Distant
thunder.*]

EPIMETHEUS.

[*Curious.*]

Is it, then, so mysteriously contrived?

[*Coming closer.*]

Thou art not skillful. Gather the loose ends
And thread them through the loop that hangs
above.

[*Again the rumbling of distant thunder.*]

So. That is well. Now try thy feeble strength
And pull.

[*She obeys, and the cord falls loose. Heavy
muttering of thunder. Darkness gathers
quickly.*]

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PANDORA.

Ah—'t is unfastened, quite!

[*She stands back, half frightened, hesitates a moment, then—*]

Come, let us take a peep—a little peep!

It cannot matter—just a little peep!

EPIMETHEUS.

No—tie the knot again; my vow doth keep
The mystery within the box, although
The slender cord doth fail it. Let it be.

PANDORA.

[*Trying her strength against the lid, unavailingly.*]

We will not open it, but just a crack—
A crack so small it cannot matter, then
We 'll keep thy foolish vow; so come and lend
Thy strength but just a moment. [*Listens.*]

O—I hear

A sound—'t is voices—they are calling me!
“Pandora”—thus they say—“Give us a
breath,”—

“A tiny breath of air!” Thou knowest now
It is but right that we should open.—Come!

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[Epimetheus yields. It has become very dark. As the box yields to their united pressure, an awful clap of thunder is heard, and a sudden vivid streak of lightning reveals them, as the box bursts open and a number of little, red, wicked-looking sprites fly out with a rush. The lightning and thunder continue, and Pandora and Epimetheus are seen wildly struggling to close the box, which they finally succeed in doing. In a dim blue light the imps disappear.]

PANDORA.

[Terribly frightened.]

O—Epimetheus—what have I done?

EPIMETHEUS.

Aye—well sayest thou, what hast thou done?
I warned thee—Woman—and thou wouldst not
hear.

PANDORA.

Ah, I have dared defy the deities,
And now I am afraid! Where shall I go?

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EPIMETHEUS.

Aye, where? For thou hast angered Jove himself.

Didst hear his threatening thunderbolts, and
note

His lightning's vivid flashes?

PANDORA.

Woe is me!

I know not what my foolish hand hath done,
But those were things that boded ill for us.

O, they were horrible! Let us away
And hide until the gods their wrath hath stilled.

EPIMETHEUS.

It may not be. There is no hiding-place.

Woman—thou hast brought mischief to the
world!

A curse upon thee for thy foolishness!

[Pandora sinks down beside the box, utterly crushed, and rests her head wearily upon it. Epimetheus turns angrily away from her and throws himself upon the bench in an attitude of utter despondency. In the background Melpomene is seen to enter. She lingers sadly near them, as though controll-

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ing the situation. Little Cupid limps across the back of stage with manner dejected, his quiver dragging, his bows broken. The flowers which bloom in profusion all about, droop on their stems. Suddenly Pandora lifts her head. Her face has lost its expression of woe, and she poses as if listening to a voice within the box, her face becoming more and more radiant as she listens.]

PANDORA.

O Epimetheus, I hear a voice—
A tinkling silver voice—and 't is within
The box! What shall I do? It says—it says—

EPIMETHEUS.

Woman, be still! Enough ill hast thou done!
Speak not to me of voices!

PANDORA.

O—it says—

“Pandora, open to me.”

EPIMETHEUS.

Yea, and so
Did all those evil spirits conjure thee.
Talk not to me of voices.

THE GIFT

PANDORA.

But it *sings!*

It is the sweetest voice I ever heard!
O, I am mad with loving it!—It sings
Like birds and brooks, and gentle summer
winds.

EPIMETHEUS.

'T is but a siren voice; give it not ear.

PANDORA.

[*Suddenly resolved.*]

Yea, I will loose the singer. Never yet
Hath voice been so alluring, gentle, kind.

[*To the voice within, as she struggles to
open the box.*]

Yea, I will loose thee gladly! O, my heart
Beats swift for joy! The lid lifts—

[*It suddenly opens and Pandora stands
back as the beautiful winged figure of Hope
springs up, amid radiant light, and poises
gracefully upon the box.*]

Ah, how fair!

My husband—Epimetheus—behold!

THE GIFT

[Epimetheus joins her quickly, and they gaze with rapture upon the figure before them.]

HOPE.

[To Pandora.]

Pandora, thou wert made of earth, and so
But mortal, and hast brought into the world
Through disobedience full many ills;
So thou and thine must suffer, and thy mate,
Because he aided thee, must suffer too.
But harken; though 't was Woman let escape
The ills that mortal flesh must suffer, yet
'T was Woman who had courage left to lift
Again the lid, and give me to the world.
I am the spirit Hope—the child of Faith,

[A pause, as the light about her seems to dance, and assumes rainbow hues.]

And I have come to dwell with thee for aye.
Nor storm nor stress shall shake thee, nor shall
 ill
Prevail, if thou dost keep me near thy hearts.
I love thee both, and I will be thy friend
Through life, in death, and through the great
 Beyond.

THE GIFT

If Care doth come to sit upon thy brow,
My hand will soothe, and bid him fly away,
My lips will kiss thine eyes if thou dost weep.
I pray thee, wilt thou have me in thy home?
Wilt cherish me and love me?

PANDORA.

Ah—with bliss!
I love thee—love thee, gentle spirit. See!
My tears are falling, yet they speak my joy.

EPIMETHEUS.

Thrice welcome, radiant spirit! From our home
We bid thee, beg thee, never to depart!

[To Pandora, whom he takes in his arms.]

And woman—Wife—come close within mine
arms;

I am a Titan, and I, too, have sinned.
Now may we know the fullness of our love,
For we have sinned together, and have learned
The meaning, too, of suffering and pain;
Yet we shall live above these earthly things
As god and goddess, for with Hope to guide,
Our spirits shall, undaunted, conquer all,
And trust a bright hereafter. Kiss me, dear!

THE GIFT

*[As the rainbow-lights play about them,
Cupid flies in and hovers over them, and in
the background the Muses dance by, harps
in their hands, as they sing softly.]*

MUSES.

So love and hope,
And charm the hours away,
For now is the springtime of the world,
And all the earth is gay.
Then laugh, and love,
Let Love and Hope hold sway,
For earth 's in its blossoming, love 's in its bud,
And Hope shall live for aye.

THE END.

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